

ST. PETER'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
 Rev. L. Collins Defibaugh, Pastor
 Guest Speaker: Mr. Ralph Link
 FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY June 25, 1967

SANCTUARY PRAYER

May all our thoughts, O God, be guided by thy Word and ruled by thy Spirit; that we may have among us the same mind which was in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

- Organ Prelude
- *Processional Hymn No. 8
 - *Trinitarian Ascription Page 3
 - *Scripture Sentence for the Day Page 3
 - *Exhortation to Confession Page 4
 - Confession of Sin and Kyrie (Cong. seated) Page 4
 - Assurance of Pardon Page 5
 - *Doxology and Collect for the Day No. 550
 - Hymn No. 43
 - New Testament Lesson Philippians 4:8-13
 - *Gloria Patri; Apostle's Creed
 - *Pastoral Prayer; Lord's Prayer; Choral Response
 - Worship in presenting our Tithes and Offerings
 - Organ Offertory
 - *Offertory Response and Dedication Prayer
 - Anthem
 - Sermon Hymn (Read words silently) No. 472
 - Sermon "AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM?" Mr. Ralph Link
 - *Sermon Prayer
 - *Benediction and Choral Amen
 - *Recessional Hymn No. 221
 - Silent Meditation (Cong. seated for your silent parting prayer.)
 - *Organ Postlude

(*) Denotes Standing

We welcome all visitors. Please sign our Guest Book in the Narthex after the service.

The flowers on the Altar are presented to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Husband and Father by the C. A. Alben family.

Head Usher: Elder Ernest McWithey; Acolyte: Alan Cross.

Organist: Mrs. E. L. Young; Assistant Organist: Mrs. T. D. McMaster; Choir Director: Mr. Darl Hollen.

We welcome to our pulpit today Mr. Ralph Link, a Lay Ministry student for Penn West Conference. We are happy to have him share in our worship and to receive this practical experience.

Vacation Bible School begins on Monday, June 26th, until Friday, June 30th, from 9:00 A.M. until 1:30 P.M. Kindergarten Dept. will meet at Calvin Church, and the Primary and Junior Depts. at St. Peter's. All boy and girls aged four years through sixth grade (completed) are invited. Children will bring their lunches, and milk will be provided.

The Senior Choir will practice on Tuesday at 7:45 P.M. The Youth Choir will practice on Wednesday at 7:00 P.M.

The Church Family Picnic will be held on Wednesday, July 12th, at the Community Park. There will be a tureen dinner at 6:30 P.M. for all church members and their families. There will be games and a closing Vesper Service.

Your Pastor will be on vacation next week at "Expo '67" and the New England States. Should the services of a Pastor be needed, contact Mr. Frank Luek, Consistory President, and he will make or help with necessary arrangements.

And Impossible Dream?

Text. Phillipians 4:13

I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.

Introduction;

Our text for this morning is the 13th verse of the 4th chapter of Phillipians. An impossible dream? Perhaps. But let us delve into this a little deeper before we draw any final or definite conclusions. Several factors were the motivating force behind my choice of this text today. One factor was the words of a ~~song~~ song from a Broadway show. Another was the words of a poem. And still another was the words of a grade school teacher when I was in the sixth grade. But the prime motivation that put all of these thoughts into motion was the graduation of our oldest son Dale from elementary school. From there on all these other thoughts fell into place. I would like to ask each one of you to think with me as we do some exploring. Think back to the day when you stood on the threshold of life. This could have happened in grade school, upon our graduation from high school or when we reached maturity. It makes no difference when this occurred, whether it happened a few weeks ago, last year, or fifty years ago. And whether we want to admit it or not it has happened to each of us. What I am referring to is the time in our life when we really faced this business of living. When we have stood up to it and said o. k. here I am. I'm going to do so and so and become such and such and really amount to something. But where are those dreams now? Where are those goals we strove to reach? Are we the person we set out to be? Have we really achieved and found our place in this world? These are the things we should be asking ourselves and if our answers to all or some of these questions are in the negative, then perhaps we should be doing something about changing our answers to the affirmative.

In this business of living we need a goal. We must also have a procedure for living and we must do the actual living.

I. Goals:

In practically every endeavor that is undertaken by man there must be a goal. Something to aim for and to shoot at. This applies in business, in sports, in school, even in everyday life around the home. Think what major league baseball would be like if there were no pennant to shoot for. Think what Zeligople High School sports would be like if there were no championship game to strive for. What would be the sense of a businessman trying to get ahead if there were no chance to advance up the ladder? And you housewives strive to meet goals every day. Maybe you never thought of it this way but you do. You strive to get your washing and ironing done so you can meet your tight schedule for meals, shopping and so forth. Now what does all this have to do with us? Just this. As Christians we must have certain set goals to strive for in our religious life, just as we have goals to strive for in our personal lives. We need to continually have our goal in mind. We must constantly think of where we are going and strive to stay on the path leading there. That school teacher I mentioned earlier was constantly telling us, "~~to~~ hitch our wagon to a star". This was her favorite expression. But unfortunately it fell on many deaf ears, mine included. What she was trying to tell us was to reach beyond our grasp, and to strive for something beyond our abilities and our capabilities. In other words not to be content with merely living life but to set a goal beyond it. And this is what we all should be striving to do. To live our lives as Christlike as we can and to live now so that we may someday live eternally with God. This should be our goal. An impossible dream? No my friends not impossible but very difficult. Christ set the goal for us and He laid the groundwork. He rose from death to life and we can do this too

if we heed His call to forsake all else and take up our cross and follow Him.

II. Procedure.

Most of us would not think of taking a long trip by car without first mapping out our route. Yet this is the procedure many of us Christians use to try to reach our goals. We set our goal and never bother to map out the route to get there. Is it any wonder that so many people become disenchanted with the Church? If the major industries of our nation were run like some of run our lives our country would really be in sad shape. But fortunately God gives us each a few years ^{TO LIVE} ~~to~~ correct the errors we make as we work toward our goal. But we can't always wait until tomorrow because sometimes tomorrow never arrives. So maybe we should sit down and take stock of our lives as soon as possible. We need to ask ourselves am I making use of the tools I need to lead me toward the goal? These tools in case you are wondering, are our Bibles, daily communion with God in prayer, and faith. Of the three probably the most difficult to use is faith. It's easy to find consolation by reading a few verses from the Bible. And it's not too difficult to pray, especially when we need help. But to place ourselves completely in the hands of God and trust that He will take care of all our needs is very, very hard to do. We are reluctant to do this because we like to look out for ourselves. It kind of makes us feel important to accomplish things on our own hook, rather than depend on someone else. But you see, most of ^{us} ~~are~~ are missing the whole point of living by faith. The old saying, "God helps them who help themselves," is more truth than poetry. God doesn't just want us to sit back and call on Him for help. We must ask Him to help us live, and then go ahead and live, believing that He will lead us and show us the way. It takes ~~the~~ action on our part to put faith to the test. Then the point of our text comes into focus very clearly. "I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives

me." This is real faith. The little poem I mentioned before brings this point out rather nicely. It was written by Helen Steiner Rice and it is entitled, "Climb till your dreams come true." (The poem, page 54)

An impossible dream? You be the judge.

III Actual Living

Life to many people is not worth the living. We can witness this every year by the statistics that are printed showing how many people commit suicide. ^{EXAMPLE} I once worked with a man who was rather sour on life. This was wrong, that was wrong, and nothing nor no one was right. He made me feel rather miserable and I dreaded when I had to work with him. He would tell his tale of woe and end it with the old saying, "It's a great life if you don't weaken." ^{ONE} ~~once~~ day when he said this it was once too often and I replied, yes it is a great life and I enjoy every minute of it. I went on to explain the wonderful things we have in life and the beauty that is ours to enjoy. Shortly after this I noticed a change in him. He wasn't so sour and sarcastic anymore. He seemed to enjoy life a little more than he did before. Now I don't take credit for ^{THE} ~~this~~ transformation in this fellow. But perhaps something of what I said was a point that he had never thought of before and maybe he began to think differently because of it. We all feel at sometime or another that life is unbearable. Things begin to get us down and if we dwell on our misfortunes we can become very bitter. But what we forget is that everyone has disappointments. Everyone has troubles of some kind. But did Christ ever promise that this life would be a bed of roses? Did He ever say it would be free and easy? He said just the reverse didn't He? He tells us that the way to eternal life is narrow. He tells us that we will be persecuted for His sake. He also tells us that if we have faith and trust in God we shall prevail. It takes more guts to face life than it does to run away from it. Anyone can evade problems and trouble by running. and when we try to run from our problems who are we kidding? Can we ever escape our troubles? Sooner or later we must make a stand. It's the person

with real character who faces up to life and meets it head on, whether it's good or bad, whether it's fair or foul. And whether it's joy or sorrow. But isn't life really worth living? Do you enjoy life? We should enjoy every day that is ours to live. We should be able to enjoy it from the minute we open our eyes in the morning till we lay down to go to sleep at night. We not only should enjoy life but we can if we just do one simple thing every day. And that is to begin each day when we arise with a prayer of thanksgiving for another day in which to serve Him. And as we continue through the day, periodically, to thank God for the little things that are ours to enjoy and use. The sunshine, the air we breathe, the rain and snow, flowers, friends, family and many other things. These are all things most of us take for granted. Try it once starting today when we leave here. Try thanking God for being here, for the nice day we have, for the nice sunshine and for other things maybe you can think of. Do this every day for a while and see what a different outlook you have on life and how much more you will enjoy living it. If we each one did this we would all be able to keep our goal before us and to press on toward it, holding it ever before us and striving to attain it. There is a beautiful song taken from the Broadway show, "Man of LaMancha", and it is entitled, "The Impossible Dream", which sums this all up quite well. Perhaps you have heard it on the radio sung by Jack Jones, ~~Amy Williams~~ ^{MATT MUNRO} or Robert Goulet. May be you have never paid any attention to the lyrics, but they say quite a lot. ^{BASICALLY} Although this is not a religious song it can have a religious connotation if we look for it.

To dream the impossible dream. To fight the unbeatable foe. To bear with unbearable sorrow. To run where the brave dare not go.

To right the unrightable wrong. To love pure and chaste from afar.

To try when your arms are too weary, to reach the unreachable star.

This is my quest, to follow that star, no matter how hopeless no

no matter how far. To fight for the right without question or pause to be willing to march into Hell for a Heavenly cause. And I know if I'll only be true to this glorious quest, then my heart will lie peaceful and calm when I'm laid to my rest. And the world will be better for this, that one man scorned and covered with scars still strove with his last ounce of courage to reach the unreachable star.

An impossible dream? No my friends. It is only what Christ would have us do, and that is to continue to strive to reach beyond our grasp and to strive toward our goal. I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me. Let us pray.

An Impossible Dream ?

PHIL

Text: Philippians 4: 13.

"There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength. "

One of the most beautiful songs to come from the Broadway stage, is the song, "The Impossible Dream." It is taken from the musical, "Man of La Mancha." Although it is not a religious song it could very easily have religious connotations if it were applied in this direction.

To dream the impossible dream, to fight the ^{UN-}beatable foe: To bear with unbearable sorrow; To run where the brave dare not go. To right the unrightable wrong; To love pure and chaste from afar; To try when your arms are too weary, to reach the unreachable star. This is my quest, to follow that star, no matter how hopeless, no matter how far. To fight for the right without question or pause; To be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause. And I know if I'll only be true to this glorious quest, then my heart will lie peaceful and calm when I'm laid to my rest. And the world will be better for this; that one man scorned and covered with scars still strove with his last ounce of courage to reach the unreachable star. "

Many times when I have heard this song I have thought how wonderful it would be if we all applied these thoughts in our lives. Then too I am reminded of one of the verses we heard read for our scripture this morning. It is the 13th verse of the 4th chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians. Paul said, "There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength." This is one of the most comforting verses in the New Testament. Now if we put the two of them together and place a question mark at the end, it reads like this; There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me ~~the~~ strength. An impossible dream? In order to answer this question we need to ask ourselves if this would be an impossible dream to us. At this time of year ^{WE} I think of the young men and women who are ^{OR GUIDE TO SCHOOLS} graduating from schools and colleges, and how they are standing at the very threshold of life. And I think

back to the time when I once stood there. Have you ever thought back to that day? Have you ever thought of the dreams you had and the high ideals that you were going to strive for? The outstanding things you were going to achieve? And the hopes you had for the future? What ever became of these hopes and ideals? Are they lost and gone forever or is there still a flicker of flame awaiting the breeze to ~~become~~ ^{MAKE THEM} a reality instead of just a dead issue? I would like to ask each of us here today to think back in our lives to the day when we stood on the threshold of life. It makes no difference when this happened. Perhaps it occurred on the day of our graduation from some school or college, or perhaps it happened when we became of age. Maybe it happened much later in life. When is immaterial. What I am referring to is the time in our life when we stood up to life and when we faced this business of living. When we stood up to it and said ok world here I am, it won't be long and you will have to notice me. When we said I am going to do this ,or I am going to do that.. When we said I am going to really amount to something and my life is going to count for something. Let me ask, where are those dreams now? Are they tucked away, back in the recesses of our minds? Are they pushed out of sight and therefore out of mind? Do they ever come back to haunt us and dig at us a little? Are we the person we set out to be, or have we really achieved and found our place in this world? These are the things we should be asking ourselves, and if our answers are mainly in the negative, then perhaps we should be doing something about changing our answers to the affirmative. *AND THIS DOES NOT JUST APPLY TO OUR YOUNG PEOPLE BUT TO ALL OF US.*

In this business of living we need a goal! We need something to shoot for, something that we can aim at. This is true in many areas of life. In the sports world one athlete strives to equal or exceed the mark set by another athlete. In business one salesman will strive to sell the most goods or try to sell as much as the top man has done. When I was in the fifth or sixth grade we had an English teacher who tried to instill in us an awareness of having a goal in life. Most of us thought she was a little balmy because she was a little eccentric. But in this respect of trying to give us something to

3.

aim for and shoot at, she had the right idea. Her favorite expression was, "Hitch your wagon to a star." Unfortunately this idea and expression fell on deaf ears. Mine included. But what she was trying to tell us was to reach beyond our grasp. To strive just a little harder to go beyond our abilities and capabilities. In other words not to be content merely with living life and going through the motions, but to set a goal beyond it and strive to reach that unreachable star. And this is what we should all be striving to do. To live our lives as Christlike as we can, and to live our lives in such a fashion now, that one day we may live eternally with God. This should be our goal and nothing or no one should deter us from reaching out for it. An impossible dream you say? No my friends not impossible, but very difficult. Christ laid the groundwork for us and He set the example. We should try to walk in His footsteps daily in order to achieve our goal.

To be able to say as Paul did, that we rely on the strength that comes from God, is saying quite a bit. It means that we are not completely self reliant. That we need outside help to get through this life. This is a point I have had several arguments on with a member of my family. He tells me that he is a self made man. My theory is that there is no such animal. We can accomplish many things in our lives, we can perhaps achieve greatness or become world famous, but the fact still remains that we must rely on other people to do any or all of these things. If you doubt this think back to the very first thing this morning. If you awoke to an alarm clock or a clock radio, you were dependent upon someone else. The radio or clock was manufactured by a company and by people assembling it. It didn't just find it's way to your bedside. Then if you had cereal for breakfast, the grain was grown by a farmer and taken to a mill to be processed and thence to the factory where it was processed into the product and packaged and shipped to a store, from where you bought it. Each of these steps involved many different people without which you and I could not very easily survive. So we aren't self made people are we? This is what Paul was saying. That with this strength that comes from God we can reach the unreachable. We can live this life to the fullest and still enjoy it. God leads us and guides us and without

Him we cannot do much of anything. Oh we can survive allright. But we would be living the meaningless lives of some of the people we can see around us. Life without God isn't too meaningful. When we say we need the strength that comes from God to live, this is not an impossible dream it is the truth about life.

The most important point of Paul's statement is the point, "There is nothing I cannot master." To say this in all sincerity requires a tremendous amount of faith or an awful lot of nerve. He didn't say there are some things I can do and some that I can't. Nor did he say there are a couple things I cannot master. He said there is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength. To state this calls for faith ^{AND POSITIVE THINKING,} ~~and a very deep faith~~ at that. Paul was a man of deep faith. He had ^{the} experience of meeting Christ and from that day on his life was a life lived in faith. He knew that God was with him no matter what befell him. He placed his life in his care and then went and lived each day that God gave him to its fullest. He had the religion that we should all have. Which reminds me of the story of the negro who got up at a revival meeting and made the following statement. Brothers and sisters you all knows what a sinner I am, you know I aint been what I should. I robbed hen houses, I stole hawks, I lied and got drunk and gambled and swore, but I thank the Lord for one thing I aint never done. I aint never lost my religion. ^{WE SHOULD}

^{NOT A CASE OF RELIGION} Faith is something we can't have enough of. Because there are times in all of our lives when the faith we do have wears thin. There are times in all of our lives when we begin to have our doubts about God and religion and everything in general. This is only human nature. But we need to try a little harder at times like this, to not ~~become~~ so embittered that we lose all our perspective and all that we believe in. Too often people and church people in particular think of faith as just something that is gained and carryed through life like getting baptized or confirmed. But it isn't something that is bestowed upon us. It is something that we gain through experience. It takes events or circumstances in life to shape this faith. It requires our need or dependence upon God to bring our faith into the foreground. The old expression, "God helps those who help

What a fitting epitaph to add to anyones life. It is when we strive to do that which to others is impossible that we are at our best. Because it is at these times that we have forgotten ourselves and our little individual worlds, and we are reaching for the unreachable star. Let us keep the dreams and the high ideals in our lives. Let us never stop trying to be better than we are. Our dreams and ideals are not childish dreams, they are thoughts and ideas that can lift us to those things which are the unreachable stars.. An impossible dream? Let us pray.









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Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Married: December 15, 1951
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.